

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 14, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Zahn, Commissioners Bishop, Chirls, Lampe,
Woosley, Wu

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Larrivee

STAFF PRESENT: Kevin McDonald, Mike Ingram, Paula Stevens,
Department of Transportation; Catherine Drews, City
Manager's Office; Wayne Carlson, ABHL

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Zahn who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Larrivee who was excused.

New Commissioner Wu introduced herself. She said she was excited to be part of the Commission. She explained that she works as a transportation planner and engineer.

The Commissioners introduced themselves to Commissioner Wu.

3. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Low-Impact Development (LID) Principles: Transportation Development Code
and Design Standards Amendments

Assistant City Attorney Catherine Drews introduced the topic of integrating low-impact development principles into the city's transportation code and the development codes and standards.

Wayne Carlson, consultant with AHBL, noted that the Council established the interest statement and the principles that are being used to guide the project. The interest statement indicates that Bellevue supports the objective of maintaining the region's quality of life, including that of making low-impact development the preferred and commonly used approach to site development. The guideline principles call for amendments to be Bellevue appropriate, to recognize and seek to balance competing needs, to build upon existing information and programs, engage stakeholders, and maintain the city's compliance with the cities National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) municipal storm water permit.

Mr. Carlson said the proposed amendments to the transportation development code include explicitly allowing and encouraging permeable surfaces for sidewalks and bioretention within landscape areas along planter strips and medians. There are already examples of permeable paving on some sidewalks in Bellevue, and bioretention is in use in some planter strips and medians, but the code is silent to those approaches. The amendments related to the transportation design standards include a preference for planter strips to be a minimum of four feet wide, and allows for the use of permeable pavement where feasible in pedestrian paths and bicycle lanes. The four-foot planter strip minimum is the nominal space necessary to facilitate low-impact development practices such as bioretention.

Commissioner Bishop asked if the proposed amendment would mean the city could not build a planter strip less than four feet wide. He pointed out that two-foot planter strips have been built along West Lake Sammamish Parkway and more are planned. Mr. Carlson said the four-foot minimum is preferred but is not required.

Continuing, Mr. Carlson noted that within the Design Manual drawings, the proposed amendments allow for utilizing bioretention and vegetation-based storm water management facilities in conjunction with landscaped islands and planter strips, and recommends utilizing native species in landscaping to the maximum extent feasible. Similarly, the amendments relative to the transportation design standards Appendix B Bel-Red Area Standards call for giving preference to native plant species, permitting the use of vegetation-based storm water management facilities within landscape strips, and requiring tree grates to be removable where bioretention facilities are proposed in conjunction with trees.

Commissioner Woosley said he agreed with encouraging the use of native vegetation to the extent feasible but suggested the code language should allow for the use of non-native vegetation where those species might work better. Chair Zahn pointed out that the language included in the packet specifically allows for the use of species with a proven ability to survive in an urban environment. Mr. Carlson allowed that that is the intent and said he would make sure the correct language is included in each section.

Commissioner Chirls observed that the amendments highlight preferences without establishing any specific requirements. Mr. Drews said if the preferences were in fact mandatory, words like “shall” would have been used in the text.

Commissioner Woosley asked if any analysis has been done with regard to the costs associated with the preferred approaches. Mr. Carlson said the cost studies that have been prepared indicate variances by project. In terms of capital costs, bioretention is very competitive if not less expensive than traditional catch basins and pipe solutions. Permeable paving is more expensive than conventional pavement, though the cost of permeable systems have been trending downward.

Chair Zahn opened the public hearing.

There were no members of the public wanting to speak during the public hearing.

Chair Zahn closed the public hearing.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Paul Krawczyk, senior project manager, invited the Commissioners to attend an open house in mid-August regarding the Newport Way sidewalk and safety improvements project. He said notice of the event will be mailed out to the area south of I-90.

Mr. Patrick Bannon, president of the Bellevue Downtown Association at 400 108th Avenue NE, informed the Commission that TransManage is a service offered by the organization. TransManage has been in existence as Bellevue's transportation management association since 1984, the main function of which has been to provide Transportation Management Program (TMP) implementation for several buildings in the community, including several downtown. He said TransManage stands ready to provide any background material that would help provide context around successes and lessons learned from implementation of the TMP code regulations. He encouraged the Commission to recommend retaining the spirit of the TMP code which has made meaningful progress toward reducing drive-alone trips in the community.

Commissioner Bishop asked if TransManage contracts with the city or with the buildings. Mr. Bannon said the contracts are with the buildings. Buildings have the option of not contracting with TransManage to be their building coordinator in implementing the TMP code regulations. TransManage is not restricted to the downtown only. The team also functions as a contractor with the city in some areas through the Choose Your Way Bellevue program to provide citywide outreach on TDM programs.

Chair Zahn asked if TransManage provided input as part of the recent survey. Mr. Bannon allowed that it did.

Commissioner Chirls asked what role TransManage plays in other cities. Mr. Bannon explained that the organization works with Kirkland and Issaquah to assist with implementation of their TDM programs. Seattle, Redmond and other cities have TMP regulations and codes in place. In Bellevue the code has served the purpose of applying a standardized approach to development to effectively mitigate impacts on the transportation system. There has been some interest in looking at the performance standards for the TMPs to make sure they are realistic and up to date.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Woosley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lampe and the motion carried unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

7. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW/APPROVAL

- A. May 12, 2016
- B. May 26, 2016
- C. June 9, 2016

A motion to approve all three sets of minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Woosley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chirls and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Low-Impact Development (LID) Principles Project Proposals

Commissioner Wu suggested it would be helpful to include a paragraph at the start of each section that offers a brief explanation of the intent. Mr. Carlson said the challenge is that the elements of the package before the Commission represent only a small part of a much larger package. The context of each section is clearer when the entire package is viewed as a whole. Ms. Drews said all of the information is posted to the city's webpage.

Ms. Drews said the package is slated to be carried forward to the Council in September. The goal is to have everything adopted by the end of November. A transmittal memo from the Transportation Commission would be in order.

A motion to recommend adoption of the LID amendments was made by Commissioner Chirls. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lampe and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Transportation Management Program Review

Senior Transportation Planner Mike Ingram reminded the Commissioners about the alternatives reviewed to date that ranged from taking no action to eliminating the TMP code altogether. In between are the options of focusing only on the elements that are dated or not working; shifting to a more performance-oriented focus; and moving to a more flexible approach. He allowed that the opportunity to mix and match was on the table. The Commission will need to formulate a recommendation in September as to what approach to take.

Commissioner Bishop suggested alternative 3.b.i and 4.b are essentially opposite approaches. Mr. Ingram said he viewed them as being complementary. Alternative 3.b.i, changing from a percentage reduction in drive-alone to a specific target level, goes to how the current code is written. A baseline survey is required and then the building is expected to reduce its drive-alone rate by 35 percent over ten years. It has been found that 35 percent is too aggressive a target, and that other cities set an areawide drive-alone rate rather than focusing on reducing from a baseline. Alternative 4.b envisions formulating a flexible menu of options approach for implementation.

Commissioner Woosley said he favored moving away from aspirational goals to realistic outcomes. He said he also favored adopting a flexible approach.

Commissioner Chirls said control lies at the building level not the area level. Accordingly, whatever approach is taken should be consistent with the ability to effect change at the building level. He added that there is variability between buildings depending on their age. The newer buildings, especially those with LEED ratings, have facilities for people to shower after the walk or bike to work. In some of the older buildings, the flexibility to make wholesale changes is limited. It would be good to have statistics that are based on building age. Mr. Ingram pointed out that any code revisions ~~that are effected~~ will apply to new development. A pathway could be developed that would encourage existing buildings to shift over to the new framework, but changes to the code would not in fact have any effect on existing agreements. The current code allows for making adjustments to the required 35 percent reduction based on an analysis of existing conditions. What is not allowed under the current code is setting an initial agreement with new buildings using any figure other than 35 percent.

Commissioner Wu asked if the TMP code applies only to commute trips. Mr. Ingram allowed

that it does. Commissioner Wu said it was clear to her a new approach is needed, and she encouraged consideration of developing a pathway to bring along the existing buildings that operate under the current code. If used properly, Alternative 4.b would be a good thing, but it should not be considered an alternative so much as the approach for implementing the preferred alternative. Alternative 5 is not a viable option. Mr. Ingram agreed that there would be some significant issues involved with simply eliminating the TMP code provisions, including loss of the framework the code provides that could lead to extended negotiations and a drawn-out process with developers.

Commissioner Woosley noted that the intent of the TMP code is to help the transportation infrastructure function as development continues to occur. He said there is really no information about how the system will function at build out under the current zoning, and the Planning Commission is looking at potentially significant increases in the densities for the downtown. Nationally, the number of square feet per office worker will by 2017 average 151, down from 176 square feet in 2012 and 225 square feet in 2010. The trend is putting more people per square foot into office buildings than was anticipated when they were constructed. In looking to revise the standards, it will be necessary to have the bigger picture in mind.

Commissioner Chirls agreed and suggested it would be beneficial for the Planning Commission and the Transportation Commission to meet jointly to discuss that bigger picture. The zoning recommendations made by the Planning Commission directly affect density, which directly affects the transportation issues the Transportation Commission grapples with.

Chair Zahn pointed out that if it will take involving lawyers to create pathways for the older buildings to fit into the new vision, the result could be an administrative nightmare.

Commissioner Woosley commented that while some of the older buildings may face physical challenges associated with putting in secure bike racks and other facilities, the businesses in them that are of a certain size are subject to the state Commute Trip Reduction Act requirements. In some instances, those requirements and the city's requirements are duplicative.

Commissioner Lampe asked where things stand with regard to the Planning Commission's work on the recommendations from the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC. Mr. McDonald said the Planning Commission is set to have a study session on July 27 to go over some of code revisions. The intent is to have zoning code and downtown subarea plan changes adopted before the end of the calendar year. The recommendations formulated by the Transportation Commission relative to policy amendments for the downtown subarea plan will be merged with the recommendations on the land use and urban design side into a single update to the subarea plan.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that when the Commission worked on the transportation-related elements of the Downtown Livability Initiative, it was said that the work was focused only on tweaking things around the edges and would not change the density of the downtown. Now it appears that what is being proposed will in fact result in significant increases in building height and density, all of which could have a direct impact on the transportation system. A fairly comprehensive evaluation of the new densities is needed. Mr. McDonald explained that a traffic analysis has been run using the BKR model and the proposed new zoning. The work included a level of service analysis for 2030 for a downtown baseline that was previously shared with the Commission. It is not possible, however, to do a build-out analysis for transportation modeling purposes. While it may be possible to forecast land use to

a theoretical build-out based on lot square footage, building FAR and building height, the numbers such a forecast would yield would not be fully accurate given that not everyone builds to the maximum. The key to transportation planning is the assumptions that go into determining travel demand and the modeshare that is associated with new buildings. Beyond 2030, it even the assumptions are unclear and any modeling results would be essentially unrevealing.

Commissioner Woosley suggested using a term other than “alternatives” to avoid implying that they are mutually exclusive. Mr. Ingram said they could be called “options.” He added that there will be additional meetings in the fall after direction is given from the Council for getting into actual code language.

Chair Zahn said it was clear to her that the Commission did not favor either the no action option or the option to eliminate the TMP code entirely. Commissioner Bishop suggested that while that might be true for the Commission, both options should be included on the survey to generate comments and reactions. He said he was particularly interested in receiving feedback on the notion of eliminating the TMP code given his questions about whether or not the code really has any positive impact.

Mr. Ingram said the feedback received from the online open house will be used to inform the recommendation to the Council. The online open house will provide the opportunity to share detailed information about the project and to solicit comprehensive input. The intended audience is building developers, owners, managers and others involved with TMP implementation, as well as building tenants. The general public could also be invited to participate.

Commissioner Chirls said he could see no benefit to excluding anyone from participating. He added that without knowing what the preferred options will be, there can be no expectation of generating comprehensive input.

Mr. Ingram explained that the online open house will have six stations, beginning with a welcome and purpose. The second section is an overview that describes what a Transportation Management Program is, why they are required and how they work.

Commissioner Bishop cautioned against wording that is vague or not easily understood in drafting the survey. Commissioner Chirls agreed. He also proposed offering far fewer alternatives and clarifying the objectives and pros and cons for Alternatives 2, 3 and 4.

Chair Zahn commented that things have not progressed to the point of highlighting one approach over another. The survey is intended to yield general comments about each possible approach. As a way of being clear, the first option should be titled “code provisions remain unchanged,” and the last option should be something like “eliminate the current code provisions altogether.” The second, third and fourth options do not necessarily sound all that different from each other.

Commissioner Chirls agreed and said the second, third and fourth options could be replaced with an option focused on replacing the current code with an outcome-based menu of options. That would leave only three options on which to comment.

Commissioner Woosley pointed out that the TDM code is specific to large employers, property owners and managers. The survey will likely generate some good feedback, but it would be

perhaps even more valuable to bring together those who are charged with implementing the regulations. Those are the people who will be best at flushing out the particulars.

Mr. Ingram agreed with the need to simplify the survey language. He pointed out that the earlier survey, which was sent to those who are actively involved with implementation, asked about the current code provisions. For the more general audience, however, specific questions about the code provisions would not be appropriate.

Chair Zahn suggested the survey respondents should be given the opportunity to explain they like or do not like the various options.

Chair Zahn agreed with Commissioner Wu in saying that the downtown is not the only place there are challenges during the peak hours. Eastgate, Factoria and other discrete areas see their streets clogged. Outreach efforts should extend broadly beyond the downtown area. Commissioner Woosley suggested that as a minimum, the geographic scope should be expanded to include the areas where the city seeking to allow transit-oriented developments. That includes Eastgate, Factoria, BelRed, Crossroads and the downtown.

Commissioner Chirls said as a downtown resident he knows that the biggest impact on traffic is construction and development itself which brings about multi-year impacts. Those impacts have not been ameliorated to any great extent in the downtown area. He asked if in fact construction impacts are considered in the Transportation Management Program. Commissioner Bishop said that is the nature of downtowns everywhere. Downtown construction has historically triggered problems for transportation systems.

Chair Zahn said the question is whether there are things the city should consider for the short term to help mitigate construction impacts. The work of the Commission is primarily focused on future years, but the fact is the city is struggling with transportation currently because of decisions made in the past. Current needs should be taken into account.

Mr. Ingram pointed out that the TMP deals with what happens after buildings are completed and are occupied. Construction is addressed through other city codes. Commissioner Chirls commented that because of all the construction, for at least the next four years the TMP will be irrelevant for most who live and work in the downtown.

Chair Zahn suggested the Commission would benefit from having an update regarding the city's intended approach for dealing with construction nightmares over the next seven years.

Commissioner Lampe commented that the tools employed by other cities should be examined to see what approaches met with success.

Chair Zahn asked if the city would consider offering incentives or grants to encourage buildings that are currently without shower and other facilities to put them in, on the presumption that doing so would help to get people out of their cars. Mr. Ingram said there is a program currently under way that offers building managers the opportunity to apply for up to \$8000 for proposing methods for reducing trips to their buildings. The list of suggestions includes improving bike parking, holding events to promote transit, subsidizing transit, and implementing rewards programs for building tenants. The fact is, many of the older buildings are being upgraded just to make them more attractive to tenants.

Commissioner Woosley commented that if properly structured, incentive systems work. If the

incentives offered, however, are not worth anything, they will not be used.

Mr. Ingram said the Commission will be asked at its September 8 meeting to formulate a recommendation to be forwarded on to the Council.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Zahn raised the issue of meeting jointly or otherwise collaborating with the Planning Commission. Assistant Transportation Director Paula Stevens explained that there are certain topics neither the Planning Commission nor the Transportation Commission has jurisdiction over, including construction traffic management. A conversation on that topic held jointly with the Planning Commission would yield little. The Commission could benefit from receiving a briefing from the right-of-way staff or regarding a new program recently launched that is intended to provide information to business owners and others during East Link construction.

Commissioner Chirls pointed out that it is the Planning Commission that focuses on building heights and FAR, which has a direct tie to traffic issues related to construction. When the Planning Commission decides to raise building heights, it has an impact on construction times and methods, and on traffic. Ms. Stevens agreed but pointed out that the Planning Commission's purview is long-range; it does not focus on immediate construction impacts associated with development. Development Services staff do look at those issues and they work directly with developers and builders in regard to construction impacts. Transportation staff are also involved in saying when certain lanes in certain locations can be closed; they also deal with the anticipated cumulative impacts. For educational purposes in understanding what is going on, the Transportation Commission would benefit from a transportation staff briefing on construction traffic management.

Commissioner Chirls agreed it would be helpful to hear from staff about what they are doing. That will not, however, change anything. If the Planning Commission's long-term view is less than the resulting construction impacts, they should be made aware of that.

Chair Zahn commented that Seattle-Tacoma International airport has a sustainable master plan in place that calls for a \$10 billion investment, including a new remote terminal. The first thing that will happen, however, will be construction on enabling roadway projects. In downtown Bellevue there are two elements: the immediate short term impacts, and the decisions the Planning Commission is making that will not in the short term result in making things better. However, if there is no more deliberate thinking concerning the mid and long terms, the result will be what is currently happening, which is more construction than can be lived with. There should be a conversation around how to pace the changes to be made on the planning side to avoid having to live with untenable impacts.

Commissioner Chirls suggested the Planning Commission should be looking at the construction impacts associated with the projects planned for the next ten years. There may be some way to manage the timing of them as a way to control the impacts.

Commissioner Woosley said there are two questions to be addressed, how to manage the impacts of construction, and whether or not the city can limit the pace of construction. He suggested that the latter would be fairly problematic given the competitive environment. The project picked to go first would have the advantage because it would be on the market first, and

the project picked to go last may come in at the tail end of the market cycle. The realities of the experiences people have in driving through congested intersections is very different from the adopted level of service. There is a real opportunity to talk about how the various issues interact. The city may need to change course with regard to land use planning, maybe by distributing growth to other areas instead of trying to pack more people into the downtown. He reiterated the call for the Planning Commission and Transportation Commission to meet in joint session to gain a better understanding of the issues the two commissions work on.

Commissioner Wu agreed there should be more interaction between land use and transportation decisions. The first with regard to construction impacts should be some education for the Commission to more clearly understand what steps the staff take.

Commissioner Chirls said he assumed the staff are doing all they can. The fact is, whatever they are doing is insufficient. The fact that congestion created by construction should be considered as a factor by both the Planning Commission and the Transportation Commission.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the Commission has a whole discussion coming up about multimodal levels of service. He suggested that one of the considerations should be construction. The concept of taking away a lane for a period of time should be integrated into the level of service concept.

Chair Zahn commented that construction occurs because a product deemed to be necessary is missing. The process of construction usually involves taking something away so that something can be given back. What the city needs to do is understand and apply lessons learned from the pain that will be suffered shortly into the planning process in order to prevent the same thing from happening again in the future.

Commissioner Woosley reported that when Seattle constructed the bus tunnel project, Westlake Avenue was closed off to accommodate the work. Seven major retailers left the area and were it not for the city investing in the big Pacific Place garage and Nordstrom taking over the Fredrick & Nelson building, downtown Seattle's retail economy may not have ever recovered. Construction can trigger severe economic impacts that can last for years or be permanent.

Commissioner Wu allowed that the construction impacts of large public infrastructure projects are looked at on an areawide basis and suggested the same should be done for individual major developments in the downtown. Ms. Stevens said the city does in fact look at projects that are proposed for construction and to the extent possible allow for closures and diversions while maintaining traffic to some degree. There is a process in place that the Commission would benefit from hearing about.

Ms. Stevens pointed out that both the Planning Commission and Transportation Commission have very full calendars going forward, making it difficult to get both commissions together for a conversation. She proposed having the chairs and vice chairs, along with the staff liaisons, of the two commissions sit down to talk about what the intersection might be for a conversation.

Commissioner Woosley suggested it would be beneficial to have a representative of the Transportation Commission attend Planning Commission meetings and vice versa as a way of staying fully informed.

Commissioner Chirls said any meeting between the two commissions needs to occur before

any final decisions are made relative to the downtown livability amendments.

Commissioner Bishop suggested the Commission would benefit from having an update from traffic safety staff about how they approach evaluating collisions from a traffic safety point of view.

Chair Zahn said she would be willing to commit to an additional meeting date in order to accommodate a meeting with the Planning Commission.

12 REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Woosley reported that a group of concerned Eastgate residents have announced the formation of an organization to address the current and projected levels of congestion. They have voiced strong concerns over the negative impacts of new development under the proposed Eastgate Land Use Code amendments.

Commissioner Woosley pointed out that assuming the transportation levy moves forward, the Council increased the amount for the voters to decide on from 12.5 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value to 15 cents per thousand, and one of the prime motivators was to use the additional revenues to help get major congestion relief projects to the 60 percent design stage. That will bring projects to the level of understanding what the costs will be so funding can be sought for them. There is still a question about what process will be used to identify which projects should be highlighted and in what priority they should be moved forward. Ms. Stevens said the Council does not want to identify specific projects in terms of the levy language to avoid being locked in should needs or priorities change. A list of illustrative projects has been drawn up that will give the public a sense of what they can expect. The Council has made it clear that the Commission will have a prominent role to play in making project recommendations.

Commissioner Lampe said his role as chair of the East Main station area CAC had come to an end. He said the final recommendation includes some fairly robust development for the area.

13. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. McDonald said the transportation director has called on staff and the Commission to prepare a recommendation for a complete streets ordinance for the Council. Having such an ordinance on the books will make Bellevue eligible for some significant grant funding from the Washington State Department of Transportation. A number of jurisdictions in the state already have similar ordinances. He said the Commission will have only the September 8 meeting to review and develop a recommendation for a complete streets ordinance so it can be before the Council later in September. He called for one, two or three Commissioners to work with him in developing draft language for the full Commission to review.

Chair Zahn and Commissioner Chirls and Woosley volunteered to help.

14. COMMISSION CALENDAR

Mr. McDonald reviewed the calendar with the Commission. He reminded the Commissioners that the annual Commission retreat was scheduled for July 28 at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens.

15. ADJOURN

Chair Zahn adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date